

## **Employment leads to life independence!**

Tim Simkins moved to Cheyenne in 2011. Tim had lived in a special family habilitation home in Laramie since he was a young teen and was nervous about adult life, but came to Cheyenne and toured the different provider agencies. Tim chose to live at Magic City Enterprises, (MCE). At MCE, Tim lived in a group home, had many friends and said his favorite part was a Men's Group led by Dr. John Sink there.

One of Tim's next goals was to have a job in the community. Tim went through the DVR process and was able to get a job at Goodwill Industries in Cheyenne. Tim loves his job at Goodwill. Goodwill helped Tim with skills in retail, sorting and most importantly, responsibility. "It felt really good getting that first paycheck. I liked having money in my pocket that I earned myself." One of the other benefits of working at Goodwill was that they were flexible around Tim's Special Olympics and important events to Tim. "I liked feeling needed somewhere."

In the beginning Goodwill would pick up Tim and bring him home to Magic City. One day, Tim had a strong urge to be just like everyone else and take himself to work. Tim saw one of his coworkers taking the city bus home and thought, "I can do that." He decided to approach his case manager, Heather Dodson, and ask if this could happen for him. Tim and his team were afraid at first that Tim would get lost or too cold, but supported him nevertheless. One of the employees at MCE volunteered to help Tim navigate the transit system. "Susan (of MCE) showed me all the routes and how far I would have to go from the stop to home." Pretty soon, Tim was proficient at using the bus system and memorized the times to get around Cheyenne. Tim was always armed with the number to the bus station and bus station and asked if he had questions. He also always had a cell phone and numbers for support from MCE, Goodwill and his case manager.

"Because of my Goodwill job I am much more independent. Being independent makes me feel like I am like everyone else." Heather Dodson, Tim's case manager, believes that "because of the community employment, and learning the transit system, Tim has been more confident and content with his life."

Recently, Tim moved into his own apartment. He still receives help, now from BEX (Beyond Expectations) in his residence. Interesting enough, when choosing his apartment, Tim's number one consideration was that he lived near a bus station. His dreams were realized as he now resides one block from a bus station and has access to all of Cheyenne, especially his job. "I like not having to depend on someone else to take me to work, if I'm late, it's my fault; I like to be one time."

Tim states that if he could tell others with disabilities anything he would say, "Don't be afraid to work in your community. Don't be afraid to do something different. I am really glad that I have a job."